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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Anthem Man Found Guilty of Identity Theft

(Phoenix, Ariz. – Nov. 15, 2005) Peter Mohammed Sharma of Anthem was found guilty Monday by a Maricopa County Superior Court jury of taking the identity of another, theft and unlawful possession of access devices. The latter charge applies to such things as possessing bank ATM cards that bear false or stolen names.

Sharma, 70, has also been indicted on charges of fraud, forgery and perjury. He is scheduled to stand trial on those charges in the coming weeks.

Sharma is the third identity theft defendant prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office who has attempted to file a legal name change to the identity theft victim's name after learning of the charges. Attorney General Terry Goddard is considering draft legislation that would require people filing for a legal name change to disclose if they have been charged with or convicted of identity theft.

Sharma was caught using the name "Peter Reynolds" and false Social Security numbers in transactions with Salt River Project, Cox Communications, Chase Manhattan Bank, Pulte Homes and Bank of America. Because he was caught in the process of the crime, the victims were able to minimize their losses. In one case, Pulte Homes was able to cancel his attempted purchase of an Anthem home valued at \$242,000 under a false name, date of birth and Social Security number.

Sharma, who faces up to 10 years in prison, is scheduled for sentencing on Dec. 19. Todd Lawson prosecuted this case.